

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02108

AREA	FORM NO.
	521



wn Lexington

dress 12 Summit Road

storic Name Dudley Murphy House

e: Present residence

Original residence and studio

DESCRIPTION:

te 1919

Source plans

Style Florentine Villa

Architect Harold W. Hathaway

Exterior wall fabric stucco

Outbuildings _____

Major alterations (with dates) _____

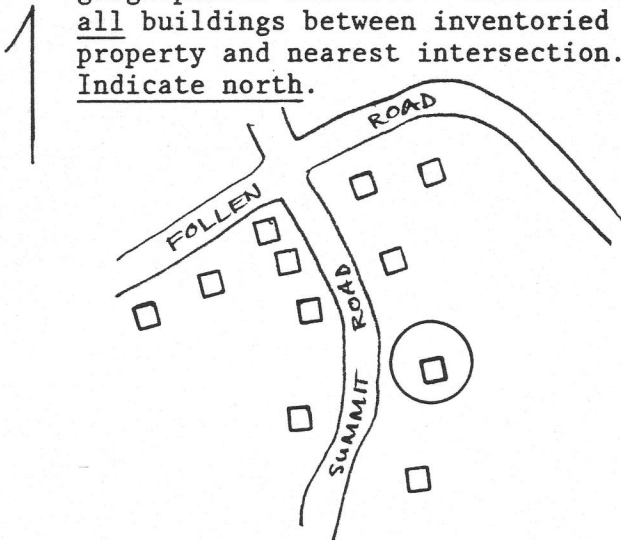
Moved _____ Date _____

Approx. acreage 2.11 acres

Setting At the crest of Mt. Independence;
set back from residential street with
houses of mixed twentieth century date.

SKETCH MAP

Show property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection. Indicate north.



Recorded by Anne Grady

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date March, 1984

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.)

This property is perhaps the finest example of early twentieth century landscape architecture in Lexington. The almost-three-acre site with extensive views to the east occupies the crest of Mt. Independence and incorporates the location of the nineteenth century observation tower. Retaining walls, many of which are curved, are used extensively to provide a level portion on the rear (view) side of the house and to landscape the high points to the east and west. The street side of the property has been fashioned into a formal Italian sunken

(see Continuation Sheet)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.)

The house was built in 1919 by Herman Dudley Murphy, an American impressionist painter. Murphy had lived and worked in Italy. According to tradition he asked architect, Harold Hathaway, to recreate the Italian Villa where he had lived in Florence for himself and his second wife.

The property incorporates the site of the observatory on Mt. Independence, and part of the original carriage road to the summit borders the eastern edge of the property. About 1834-1835, Eli Robbins, successful East Lexington fur processor and owner of the site, erected a three-story observatory on Mt. Independence, laid out drives to and walks around the summit, and connected the two driveways to the summit by a walk an eighth of a mile long. This walk was built of two solid stone walls, filled in with gravel, the side toward the summit had a trellis the whole distance covered with Isabella grapevines (Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society, II, p. 179). This was the first instance in Lexington of an owner opening his private property for public use. (The other prominent example is the B.F. Hayes estate, opened to the public in the late nineteenth century.) The observatory was a popular site, well used by citizens and strangers. Views in all directions were extensive and ships could be seen in Boston Harbor. The observatory was the site of a three day fair in 1839 which raised money for the erection of the Follen Church. Meals were served on the lower level during the fair, and the Brigade Band played on the second floor.

According to Dorothy Foster, there was a stand pipe on the site in the late nineteenth century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (name of publication, author, date and publisher)

Hudson, Charles. History of the Town of Lexington, revised and continued to 1912 by the Lexington Historical Society, Volume I, pp. 297, 471. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913.

Newspaper clipping, source unidentified.

Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society, Volume II. Lexington: Lexington Historical Society, 1900.

Personal communication from Dorothy Foster.

Personal communication from Mrs. K. Corcoran.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

Lexington

Form No:

521

Property Name: 12 Summit Road

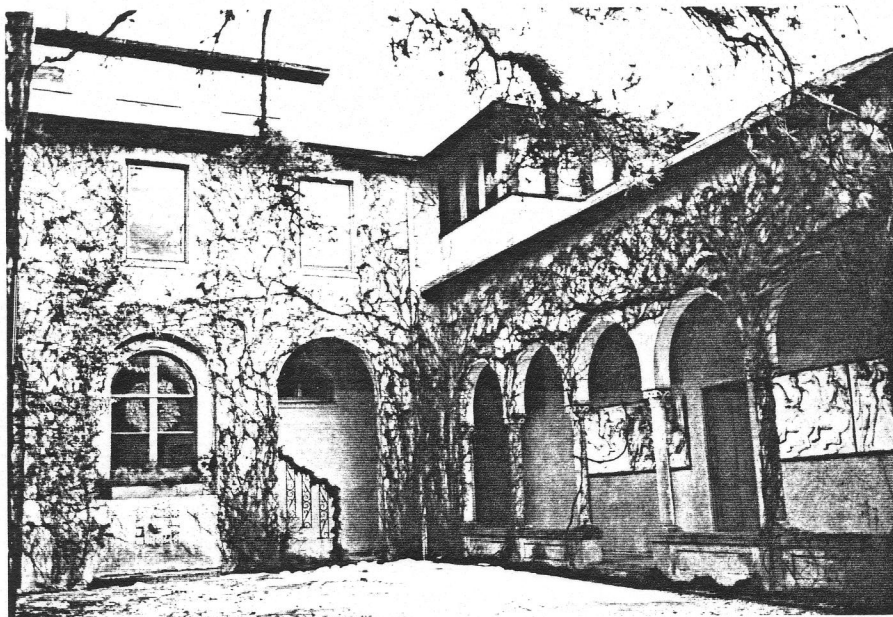
Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

garden enclosed by retaining walls. There are several arbors and many of the walls terminate in urn-shaped posts. The many scotch pines on the property were, according to the present owner, the only trees which the sheep which formerly grazed there did not molest. At the site of the observatory are remnants of stone walls and some shaped paving stones, but it is difficult to determine the original layout. Below the retaining walls on the eastern edge of the property is part of the original carriage road to the summit. (Bridle Path and Gibson Road are the lower portions of the original carriage way.)

The substantial U-shaped house was designed to be reminiscent of a Florentine villa. The large artist's studio to the left and the kitchen wing to the right form a three-sided entrance courtyard which includes an arcade of typical Italian design. The carved capitals, roundels and columns were probably originally covered with a pink/red glaze, perhaps to simulate marble. A subsequent owner added reproductions of the Parthenon frieze to the wall behind the arcade. A small fountain on the rear wall is finished with decorative ceramic tiles.

The rest of the house reflects a Craftsman/Prairie feeling compatible with its construction date. Inside are simple finishes of cyprus wood and rough plaster. There are a few small-scale Arts and Crafts Style carvings around the doors.



Staple to Inventory form at bottom